



**Arlington Historic District Commissions  
Final and Approved Minutes**

June 10, 2021 8:00 PM

Conducted by Remote Participation

**Commissioners Present:** M. Audin, D. Baldwin, C. Barry, M. Bush, S. Makowka, B. Melofchik, C. Tee, J. Worden

**Commissioners Not Present:** B. Cohen, A. Frank Johnson, M. Dunn

**Guests:** A. Weiland, H. Brosnan, G. Swanger, E. Van Gelder, K. Conway, V. Maher, L. Grindle, A. Young

1. **AHDC Meeting Opens 8:00pm**
2. **Approval of draft minutes from May 27, 2021 (corrected on agenda be “May 13, 2021” minutes) – May 27<sup>th</sup> will be circulated for next meeting. J. Worden moved approval with minor revisions, D. Baldwin seconded – D. Baldwin – y, M. Bush – y, J. Worden – y, C Barry – y, B. Melofchik – y, S. Makowka– y - unanimous approval.**
3. **Appointment of Alternate Commissioners: Pleasant Street – M. Bush, B. Melofchik, S. Makowka.**
4. **Communications**
  - a. **Emails from/to N. Frye (11-11a Academy St) regarding request for tree on strip in front of house.**
  - b. **M. Bush had communication with 58 Westmoreland Ave. (Leahy) regarding unpermitted fence – CONA granted previously for picket fence to be replaced – became a 5.5’ tall fence in contradiction to guidelines. The applicant took out the tall fence and matched the original height. Note the difference in spacing between the two fences with the pickets. He recommends allowing but on CONAs in the future we should be more vigilant.**
  - c. **C. Greeley received emails from abutters regarding 137-139 Pleasant Street.**
  - d. **C. Greeley received communication from Planning Dept. with emails sent in May to Planning Dept re: 137-139 Pleasant Street.**
  - e. **CONA Application for 51-53 Irving Street CONA Application for repair of porch.**
  - f. **Email re: chimney rebuilt for 105 Pleasant St. (Avrahami) CONA application expected soon from applicant.**

- g. **Email from abutter to 46 Jason (R. Murray) complaining about positioning of raised bed. M. Bush showed 5/28 photo on site visit. Had confusion and folks at 46 Jason had contacted C. Greeley for draft minutes and interpreted that the bed would be allowed at the location seen – will discuss under review of projects**
- h. **S. Makowka had discussion with Town Counsel Heim about Zoom meetings in light of emergency legislation expiring this month. He is optimistic something will be passed to allow remote or hybrid meetings. S. Makowka would love to get back to monthly meetings not semi-monthly as currently existing. C. Barry prefers to continue remotely and not interested being in enclosed room with strangers. M. Bush loves Zoom and would continue forever. J. Worden wants to get back to real meetings. He can't see presentations on screen. B. Melofchik agrees Zoom meetings are ok with her.**

## **5. New Business**

- a. **Continuation of Formal Hearing for 137-139 Pleasant Street (Weiland) re: expansion of the back deck over a garage.** Applicant said changes from last month are additions of the two drawings showing vertical elevations of 4 sides of the structure. Profile shown with deck on top and stairway leading off existing deck from other side and rear elevation. Top down schematic of 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and roofline shown. 20 feet x 20 feet is size of deck on top of the garage. It will be built on top of existing concrete block – up 8' or so. There is a one foot truss support layer on top of existing concrete block then surfacing followed by deck and baluster/railings. M. Bush asked about siding on the truss area – applicant didn't know what the proposed material was and said it may need to be fireproofed. Garage door – wood around it is pretty deteriorated and may need to be replaced. Doors and framing may be ok but don't know and would prefer not to change the door. Photoshopped angles from Pleasant Street and Irving Street side shown. S. Makowka asked again about trusses and cladding for the area – Applicant suggested that maybe it will match the house (which is shingled). S. Makowka noted that detail drawing shows deck railing posts are 4 x 4 posts (very skinny) while existing porch posts are listed as 6 x 6. M. Bush asked 1) distance between garage and property line (there is 6-8 feet between the two houses) – and since you are not more than 10 feet to the property line which means the materials closest to the brown house will probably need to be fireproofed. J. Worden asked if applicant owns entire house – Applicant confirmed that they did. Applicant said contractor recommended Brazilian Ipe – which they think is class A fire rated. It was noted that building inspector will determine if materials must be inflammable.

M. Bush said there are a number of public objections regardless of materials used. Massing and size seem to be of more concerns. Also, railing and balusters don't have specific material listed – would a metal railing or baluster be appropriate? M. Audin said in general we like to mimic existing conditions. J. Worden said 73 Jason Street (example of deck over garage in application) is not in a District and the Irving Street garage example is not connected to house and was there before the District was established so they are not precedents. M. Bush said there are several examples in the Mt Gilboa District. C. Barry is concerned they may be setting a precedent by approving this project. He noted that there are a cluster of similar designs on garages nearby and proposing to change one seems incongruous to the neighborhood. Suggestion of low clearance garage door. M. Bush said the Trex decking would likely not be approved. C. Barry said you will need to consider the water runoff – scuppers or downspouts. We would want to know about that visual feature. It was noted that the Commissions guidelines for railings list 4" on center, 2" x 2" (nominal) balusters. M. Bush said he'd like to focus on construction details when we haven't made a

determination about the appropriateness of massing or shape or any of that at all and he is concerned about proximity to the brown building and to the Irvington. He noted that this was well inside normal setbacks and forget about legalism – there is a question of the character of the neighborhood and whether houses are on top of each other or not. This takes a 25 foot buffer between houses and reduces to nominally 5' and so the historic separation no longer exists. While this may not be the end of the world, it is definitely a change to the character of the neighborhood and this is more important to be addressed than materials. C. Barry said cluster of garages all having the decks on top in neighborhood would really be changing the character of the neighborhood. The other 2 garages front on Irving Street. This structure is more visually prominent from Pleasant Street. B. Melofchik asked when house built – 1923. S. Makowka showed picture and description from original District Study.

S. Makowka invited comment from the public. Abutter Gabe Swanger (9 Irving St). gave a presentation in opposition of the deck project. They are in the brown house beside proposed deck. Goals – 1. Document Concerns. 2. Request proposal to be denied. 3. Propose alternative measures. Question on procedures – ZBA, Building Dept., etc. is there necessarily an opportunity to hear zoning issues? Answer: depends on what building inspector determines regarding zoning code. Concerns: No setbacks, irregular spacing – no precedent sympathetic to conditions. No privacy – maybe not AHDC concern but spacing is lost. This is very visible from Pleasant St and Irving Street. Imagine looking at night with lights and full view of this deck. Intrusive – photos shown from neighboring homes overlooking the proposed deck. Suggest using front yard for entertaining, does not encroach upon any other houses. Would solve so many problems and probably less expensive. E. Van Gelder spoke and didn't want to be in city of Somerville or Cambridge homeowner and wanted to come to Town of Arlington and chose her home because of the traditions of architecture and had the deck been there she wouldn't have purchased the condo. Very intrusive day or night and right at her window. K. Conway (Irvington) said she opposes the project and agrees with two prior speakers on concerns. S. Makowka said our focus is whether the public view of the structure and massing is appropriate and, while it is a legitimate concern, privacy for abutters is beyond our jurisdiction. V. Maher lives next door (141-143 Pleasant) and she is supportive of her neighbors and feels the obtrusiveness of the deck is much more pronounced at night. Lighting, smoke and noise is very concerning to her as well. This would be jarring to see in her neighborhood. She will send picture presented to AHDC for its record. Setting the precedent of allowing roof decks will significantly change the character of the District.

M. Bush made a motion to deny the project as proposed. He views it in the context of a major addition (or at least right on the cusp) and has been discussed approval of a structure like the proposed deck is unprecedented in any of the Arlington Historic Districts and the proposed siting and massing of the deck is inappropriate and incompatible with the District in that it is located very close to adjacent structures and is visually obtrusive from multiple points of public view. Also, there are problems of heights (substantially taller than shown in any drawings) and materials shown on existing drawing. Seconded by J. Worden. No further discussion. Roll call vote to deny: M. Audin – abstain, C. Tee – yes, J. Worden – yes, M. Bush – yes, B. Melofchik – yes, S. Makowka – abstain. Four votes in favor deny application, two abstained, none in favor. D. Baldwin asked that applicant that be informed that they are able to come back with a different proposal that addresses their concerns.

- b. **Informal Hearing for 12 Russell Terrace (Caritas Communities) for solar installation.** L. Grindle gave presentation from Boston Solar. Ran through presentation. 23 panels on front of house, 7 on rear of house. 3 foot setbacks from edge of roof and 18" setback from ridge. Not right on edge of roof, set back and behind dormers. No spacing between and aligned with actual slope of the roof. Black on black panel allowing for much more aesthetically pleasing view. Will look very uniform and symmetrical. Photo shown with panels. Photo of rear panels shown also for reference of 7 panels on the rear roof. S. Makowka wants to see if putting more panels on the back might be a feasible alternative – the southerly elevation might an improvement in solar access. He also noted that that the proposed panels on the front are not quite symmetrical – on right flush to gable but on other side there is a gap – if you remove the one oddly located panel, it can be symmetrical. Also, they need to show where any wiring conduits will run, as well as meters, cut offs and any other equipment. M. Bush said based on various presentations – he would have done panels differently. More panels on back of the house are the preference. L. Grindle indicated they will explore other design options. M. Bush said sharing the actual calculations would be helpful. A. Young said the rear roof panels are hindered by fire setbacks though it was not clear that such setbacks were required in Arlington. M. Bush showed some aerial photos of other installations which seem to have smaller setbacks – not close to 36". Regarding conduit from array to smart meter and disconnect – Applicant suggested that they will run wires into attic and will try to route it from there – most efficient pop out of attic and find fascia or trim board they can parallel down to two pieces of equipment (smart meter and 60 amp disconnect). The Commission noted its preference to run as much in interior as possible.
- c. **Discussion on discontinuation of Harvey True-Channel windows and specifically windows in our HD** – No Discussion

## 6. Old Business

- a. Avon Place and Central Street Historic District vacant commissioner seats – No discussion
- b. Report from Streetscape sub-committee – No discussion
- c. Modification of Design Guidelines (Fiberglass Gutters and Raised Beds/Planters) and Warrant Article Submission – No discussion
- d. Update on Warrant Article Submission – No discussion

- 7. **Review of projects** – Monitor M. Bush brought up 46 Jason Street planter. He showed photo of planter from 5/28 and said there was confusion created from Applicant looking at draft minutes which were inaccurate regarding actual vote. M. Bush came by and informed them that the planter was in the wrong location and, after discussing with Chair, he did not think that approving the change was within his authority to as monitor without having a discussion with the Commission first. He proposed spinning the thing 90 degrees and approving it as monitor since in his mind, the narrow side towards the street is perhaps preferable. Photo shown of bed as it sits today in this configuration. He noted that there we a number of concerns raised that the Applicant was flaunting the Commission's jurisdiction but he wanted to clarify that the Applicant was not acting in bad faith when reviewing the draft minutes. He noted that there will be a ground level bed which is not under our jurisdiction. This location is 16' from sidewalk, 2-3' from driveway. Bed is twice as long as it is wide. As monitor he proposes bed be approved where it sits. S. Makowka noted that the location of the bed was been moved to be 16' from the sidewalk but that the motion as approved was that it be horizontal to front of house façade and set back to enclose the stump. He noted that they moved it back but didn't rotate it. Also, the certificate stated that the orientation should be parallel to front of house. C. Barry said sticking

out into front yard disrupts landscape architecture. Feels it should be parallel to façade of house. M. Audin agreed. D. Baldwin said this should be built the way it was approved. If not built as approved should be coming back for a new approval. Regardless of them going by the draft minutes which were corrected before the certificate was issued, it should be corrected to align as approved by the Certificate. Applicant said they could remove the wood structure and then it would not be under our jurisdiction. Discussion about changes of grade. M. Bush said she can rotate it 90 degrees to comply. M. Bush said for the record if there the Commission feels the need to regulation a pile of dirt, he will no longer be a Commissioner.

8. **Meeting Adjourned:** 10:20pm. J. Worden moved to adjourn, C. Barry seconded. Roll call to adjourn: M. Audin – y, D. Baldwin – y, C. Barry– y, M. Bush – y, S. Makowka – y, B. Melofchik – y, C. Tee – y, J. Worden – y. Unanimous approval.

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